



NRPA AGENCY PERFORMANCE REVIEW

2025



NATIONAL RECREATION
AND PARK ASSOCIATION



Cover image: A group of youth skateboarders pose for a photo in Fairfax, Virginia.

Photo courtesy of Fairfax County (Virginia) Park Authority

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PHOTO COURTESY OF COPPELL (TEXAS) COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Local park and recreation agencies and the professionals who work in this field create environments in which the community members they serve can thrive. These unique entities shape neighborhoods, provide opportunities for health and well-being, serve as environmental havens and offer locales in which communities of all sizes can gather.

Recognizing the wants and needs of the residents they serve, park and recreation professionals are keenly aware of the necessary balance between providing vital services and working within the confines of budgetary restrictions. Maintaining accurate knowledge of current assets and planning for future needs are critical for every park and recreation agency. To assist individual agencies in evaluating their programs and making critical decisions that will benefit their communities, NRPA collects annual nationwide data on characteristics of agencies, including types of programs offered, size of population served, budget and staffing. This report contains summaries of these data.

About the Review

Park and recreation agencies nationwide used the NRPA Park Metrics survey tool to self-report all data included in this review. The *2025 NRPA Agency Performance Review* presents data from the more than 900 unique park and recreation agencies across the country that completed the Agency Performance Survey within Park Metrics from 2022 to 2024. Note that not all agencies answered every survey question.

This report highlights the characteristics of park and recreation agencies across the country in terms of facilities, programming, budget and more. These results are not standards that agencies should strive to obtain—rather, they represent a snapshot of current circumstances. Throughout this report, the term “typical agency” refers to the median—the middle value in a set of numbers or, put another way, the data point at

which 50 percent of the other data points are above and 50 percent are below. Where possible, the lower quartile (25th percentile) and upper quartile (75th percentile) are provided for a fuller view of the data.

Why not showcase averages instead? Agencies participating in this survey serve populations ranging from a few hundred to several million residents and have operating budgets varying from less than \$20,000 to more than \$100 million. These extreme values easily can skew averages. Therefore, medians are a more stable measurement. Whenever appropriate, averages are used and noted.

Additional Resources

The data published in the tables and figures within this report are presented at a high level with minimal details. While all benchmark figures contain overall results representative of the entire United States, additional breakdowns of these figures by community and agency characteristics are available on [NRPA's website](#) for readers to recognize even more powerful evidence regarding the vital work of park and recreation professionals and their agencies. Refer to the NRPA Agency Performance Review [webpage](#) to access the interactive feature to filter results by population, population density, budget, jurisdiction type, region, number of full-time equivalents (FTEs), number of parks and acres of parks maintained.

Additionally, visit the NRPA Park Metrics [webpage](#) to learn more about this survey and suite of reporting tools. Park and recreation agencies are encouraged to create a Park Metrics account for their agency or log in to their existing agency account to build a more customized benchmark report based on their specific agency size, type and geographic region. They may also use this tool to generate reports to further assist with analysis of an agency's needs and to identify peer agencies with similar characteristics.

A group of people participate in a ribbon cutting for a park in Gardner, Kansas.



PHOTO COURTESY OF GARDNER (KANSAS) PARKS AND RECREATION

INFOGRAPHIC

2025 NRPA Agency Performance Review Key Findings

Residents per park

2,411



Acres of parkland per 1,000 residents

10.2



Full-time equivalents per 10,000 residents

8.6



Share of full-time staff dedicated to operations/maintenance

46%



Operating expenditures per capita

\$ 478.96

Medians

National: 28.63

Agency: 139.87

Revenue-to-operating expenditures (cost recovery)

27.2%

Number of programs offered annually

300

Medians

National: 250

Agency: 45

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PHOTO COURTESY OF CARLISLE (PENNSYLVANIA) PARKS AND RECREATION



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PARK FACILITIES

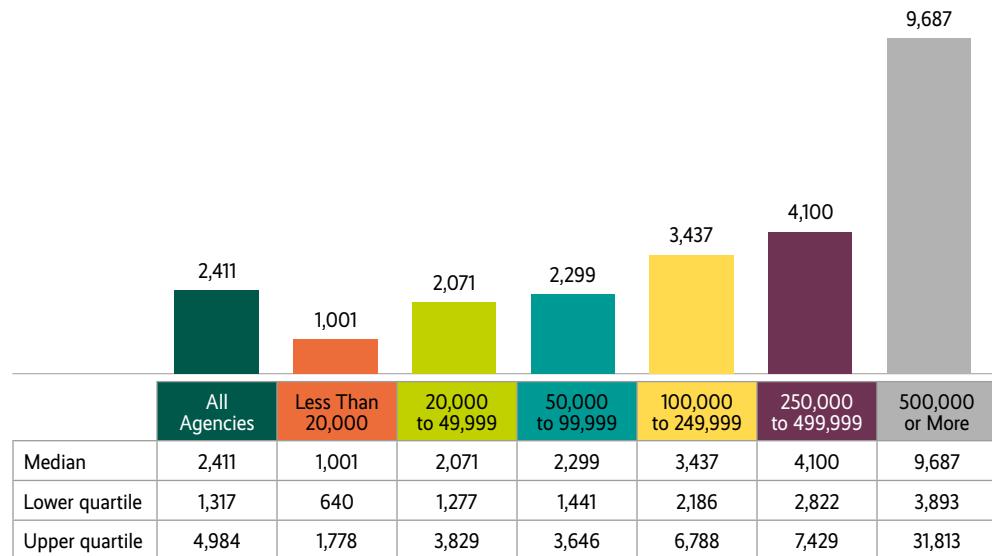


PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF TEMPLE (VIRGINIA) PARKS AND RECREATION

Park and recreation professionals provide their communities with vital infrastructure that fosters a sense of togetherness while recognizing the uniqueness of the individuals they serve. The indoor and outdoor facilities operated by local park and recreation professionals serve a multitude of purposes — from promoting health and well-being, to providing spaces where all are welcome, to providing shelters in emergencies and for mitigating natural disasters.

It is vital to ensure all people have access to quality parks, whether through preserving existing parks and green spaces or requiring these spaces as part of newly developed neighborhoods. **The typical park and recreation agency has one park for every 2,411 residents.** In heavily populated jurisdictions, a single park may serve many thousands of residents. These parks range in size from small neighborhood “pocket parks” to large regional parks.

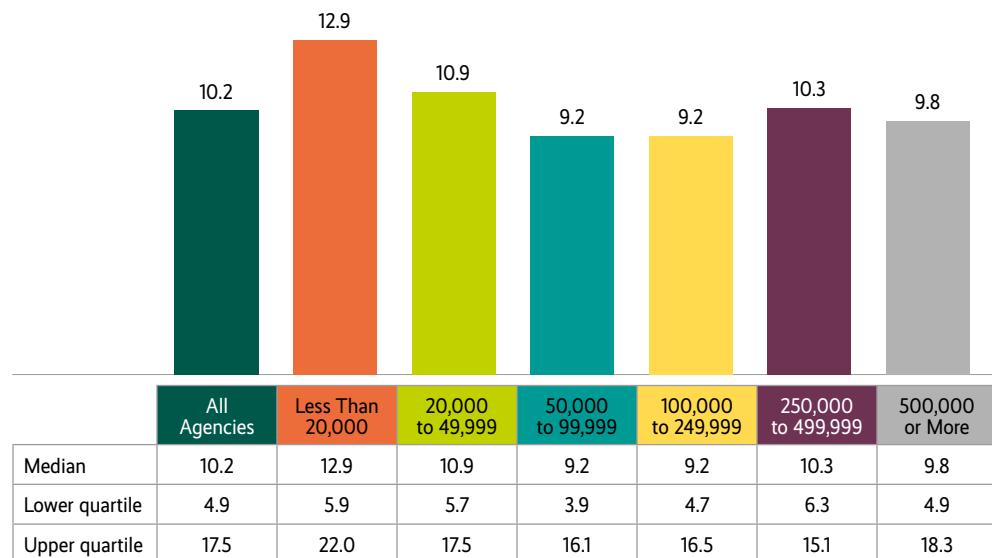
**FIGURE 1: NUMBER OF RESIDENTS PER PARK
(MEDIAN) BY JURISDICTION POPULATION**



Not all land managed by local park and recreation agencies are formal parks. Many agencies are responsible for non-park sites, such as the court-yards around government buildings, green spaces used for flood management and numerous other open

spaces. For this report, “parkland” refers to both formal parks and non-park sites. **The typical park and recreation agency manages 10.2 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents.**

**FIGURE 2: ACRES OF PARKLAND PER 1,000 RESIDENTS
(MEDIAN) BY JURISDICTION POPULATION**



Park and recreation professionals recognize the importance of outdoor facilities for allowing families and the community to gather, socialize, enjoy nature and exercise however they prefer. A single tot lot for toddlers or pickleball court for older adults may serve thousands of residents. Ninety-four percent of park and recreation agencies provide playgrounds in the local community for all ages. Overall, agencies have one playground per

3,737 residents. Playground data can be broken down further based on age and accessibility. Fifty-eight percent of park and recreation agencies offer tot lots dedicated to children ages two to five, 47 percent offer playgrounds primarily dedicated to ages five to 12, and 40 percent of all playgrounds include play elements for children with differing abilities.

**FIGURE 3: OUTDOOR PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES
BY PREVALENCE AND POPULATION PER FACILITY**

Types of Facilities	Median Number of Residents per Facility							
	Population of Jurisdiction							
	Percent of Agencies	All Agencies	Less Than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 249,999	250,000 to 499,999	500,000 or More
Playgrounds	94%	3,737	2,000	3,320	3,643	5,000	6,562	14,717
Basketball courts*	85%	8,500	4,479	8,000	8,447	9,742	13,614	22,351
Diamond fields	80%	4,749	1,958	3,408	4,560	6,821	8,581	14,729
Rectangular fields	77%	5,946	2,578	4,002	4,659	7,993	10,392	21,628
Tennis courts*	74%	6,794	3,500	6,284	5,818	8,587	10,162	15,185
Dog parks	70%	47,247	10,188	26,534	55,250	76,509	95,805	165,982
Community garden plots	54%	35,065	8,800	27,230	56,367	57,676	131,908	139,509
Swimming pools	49%	46,800	9,745	26,900	48,064	59,897	87,117	156,427
Skate parks	47%	55,772	10,776	35,000	61,384	109,934	166,245	298,172
Pickleball courts*	45%	10,419	3,483	7,333	8,592	19,822	33,600	68,894
Volleyball courts*	41%	26,904	7,057	16,487	29,214	39,166	42,314	85,672
Fitness zones+	39%	32,044	8,274	21,468	32,500	38,668	79,466	148,447
Multiuse courts^	38%	23,739	3,900	17,209	25,512	45,772	64,571	86,237
Splash pads+	38%	49,392	13,391	29,804	51,000	61,418	93,435	199,437
Multiuse racquet courts^	38%	16,776	4,659	12,984	13,339	32,239	48,898	47,410
Walking/Running tracks+	36%	17,724	6,129	21,217	19,700	38,029	39,593	70,897
Disc golf courses	35%	66,923	9,402	32,519	56,150	113,800	177,590	390,000
Driving range stations	31%	25,284	3,548	23,211	7,774	40,096	94,836	211,750
18-hole golf courses	31%	97,892	11,904	34,058	62,756	114,877	149,489	288,000
Synthetic fields+	17%	46,833	11,028	23,958	33,799	54,125	83,490	145,564
Ice rinks	17%	19,533	8,338	21,428	28,500	98,156	14,753	701,786
Nine-hole golf courses	16%	119,000	17,500	36,127	64,937	121,492	282,013	617,995
Overlay fields	14%	18,598	7,932	10,054	25,500	18,595	30,919	97,500
Waterparks	12%	82,108	17,125	34,275	64,304	147,662	263,210	445,888
Racquetball/Handball/ Squash courts	9%	48,668	14,000	23,974	40,796	45,060	181,703	154,261

*Dedicated to a single sport (not multiuse). +Fitness zones/exercise stations; splashpads/spray grounds/spray showers; walking/running tracks/loops; synthetic rectangular fields. ^Multiuse courts: basketball, volleyball, etc.; multiuse racquet courts: tennis, pickleball, etc. (excluding racquetball/handball/squash courts).

Indoor recreation facilities offer year-round opportunities regardless of the outdoor elements. These facilities within recreation centers, aquatics centers, community centers and more offer solo and group activities from pick-up basketball games to aqua aerobics. **Twenty-nine percent of park and recreation agencies provide indoor multiuse courts. Overall, agencies have one indoor multiuse court per 23,273 residents.**

Pools are a large investment for an agency of any budget. Nearly a third of park and recreation agencies (32%) operate, maintain or manage indoor swimming facilities or indoor water parks. Twenty-three percent of agencies have competitive swimming pools (measuring 25 yards/25 meters or more), while 20 percent have leisure pools (measuring less than 25 yards/25 meters). Thirteen percent of park and recreation agencies offer therapeutic pools (characterized as pools with zero-grade entry and/or heated for therapeutic benefit).



PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE (VIRGINIA) ADAPTIVE RECREATION

**FIGURE 4: INDOOR PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES
BY PREVALENCE AND POPULATION PER FACILITY**

Types of Facilities	Median Number of Residents per Facility								
	Percent of Agencies	All Agencies	Population of Jurisdiction						
			Less Than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 249,999	250,000 to 499,999	500,000 or More	
Multiuse courts [^]	29%	23,273	5,250	14,667	24,000	38,924	64,753	78,958	
Competitive swimming pools	23%	67,376	10,224	36,979	64,000	116,616	244,820	351,384	
Basketball courts*	21%	26,534	5,188	17,569	25,598	68,920	70,036	91,235	
Leisure pools	20%	75,073	11,625	32,258	63,418	114,346	244,235	558,036	
Walking/Running tracks ⁺	18%	54,237	11,625	33,431	63,671	118,244	234,702	504,201	
Pickleball courts*	17%	18,439	4,625	12,237	14,818	27,810	80,746	124,648	
Multiuse racquet courts [^]	15%	15,220	5,000	9,000	15,015	31,217	77,788	92,607	
Therapeutic pools	13%	92,833	13,000	30,037	63,610	121,478	296,738	622,237	
Racquetball/Handball/Squash courts	10%	41,017	7,692	15,655	40,708	60,338	101,055	386,970	
Tennis courts*	5%	19,286	N/A	8,761	10,428	29,673	52,892	113,493	

*Dedicated to a single sport (not multiuse). ⁺Walking/running tracks/loops; synthetic rectangular fields. [^]Multiuse courts: basketball, volleyball, etc.; multiuse racquet courts: tennis, pickleball, etc. (not including racquetball/handball/squash).



Park and recreation professionals operate, maintain and manage buildings of varying sizes and uses. Programming within building facilities, such as recreation centers, teen centers and senior centers, provides integral opportunities for the community to gather, learn and be active. **Sixty-three percent of park and recreation agencies operate recreation centers. Overall, agencies have one recreation center per 32,091 residents.** The buildings under the care of parks and recreation are not just for sports but may also include amphitheaters, nature centers and restroom facilities in parks and sports fields.

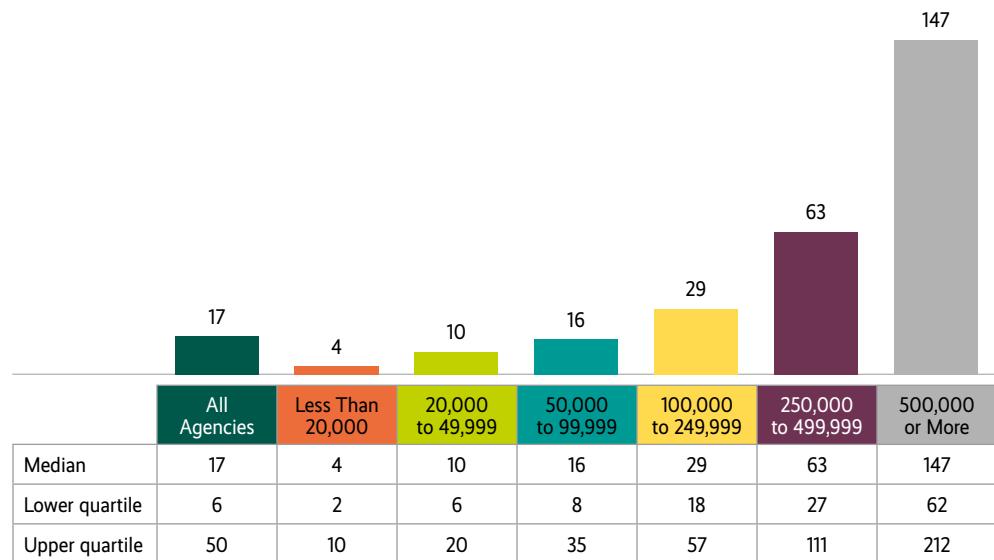
FIGURE 5: TYPES OF INDOOR PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES AND AMENITIES BY PREVALENCE AND POPULATION PER FACILITY

Types of Facilities	Median Number of Residents per Facility								
	Percent of Agencies	All Agencies	Population of Jurisdiction						
			Less Than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 249,999	250,000 to 499,999	500,000 or More	
Recreation centers (including gyms)	63%	32,091	9,875	27,517	31,805	57,200	64,807	79,719	
Community centers	60%	34,058	10,000	29,445	50,284	58,027	71,750	139,902	
Permanent and semipermanent restrooms	52%	5,455	2,359	4,976	5,521	6,782	10,223	12,340	
Performance amphitheaters	43%	62,735	10,686	34,275	60,594	115,000	278,226	512,522	
Senior centers	41%	61,822	13,966	34,058	64,937	123,671	163,674	507,961	
Nature centers	35%	132,230	8,832	34,960	64,672	143,480	280,152	513,395	
Aquatic centers	30%	57,438	13,933	32,000	60,770	109,454	148,086	490,750	
Facilities with restrooms available free of use to public not included above	27%	14,502	5,428	10,568	14,282	23,225	38,680	55,700	
Stadiums	19%	96,548	9,857	35,370	62,575	150,005	191,998	628,127	
Indoor ice rinks	12%	56,422	8,054	25,374	51,896	106,395	243,650	640,789	
Teen centers	11%	65,228	15,475	32,798	59,694	131,166	306,267	554,202	
Arenas	9%	95,000	9,402	28,500	59,630	120,878	N/A	834,573	

Local park and recreation agencies connect communities through vast networks of trails. Whether for a leisurely bike ride or a walking commute to work, trails combine recreation and function by providing access to routes free from traffic. **The typical park and rec-**

reation agency is responsible for managing and/or maintaining 17 miles of trails. This figure increases as the jurisdiction population an agency serves increases. Agencies serving populations of more than 500,000 people typically manage nearly 150 miles of trails.

FIGURE 6: MILES OF TRAILS
(MEDIAN) BY JURISDICTION POPULATION



PROGRAMMING AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES



PHOTO COURTESY OF COLUMBIA (MISSOURI) PARKS AND RECREATION

Park and recreation professionals strive to understand the needs and wants of their communities and provide ample program opportunities that best suit those varied desires. **The typical park and recreation agency offers 250 programs annually, of which 82% are fee-based.** Offering programs at low cost

or no cost ensures more people will be able to take advantage of all that parks and recreation has to offer. In some jurisdictions, agencies have established a model of no-cost programming, while other agencies are expected to recoup or exceed a percentage of their programming expenses.

FIGURE 7: NUMBER OF PROGRAMS OFFERED ANNUALLY (MEDIAN) BY JURISDICTION POPULATION

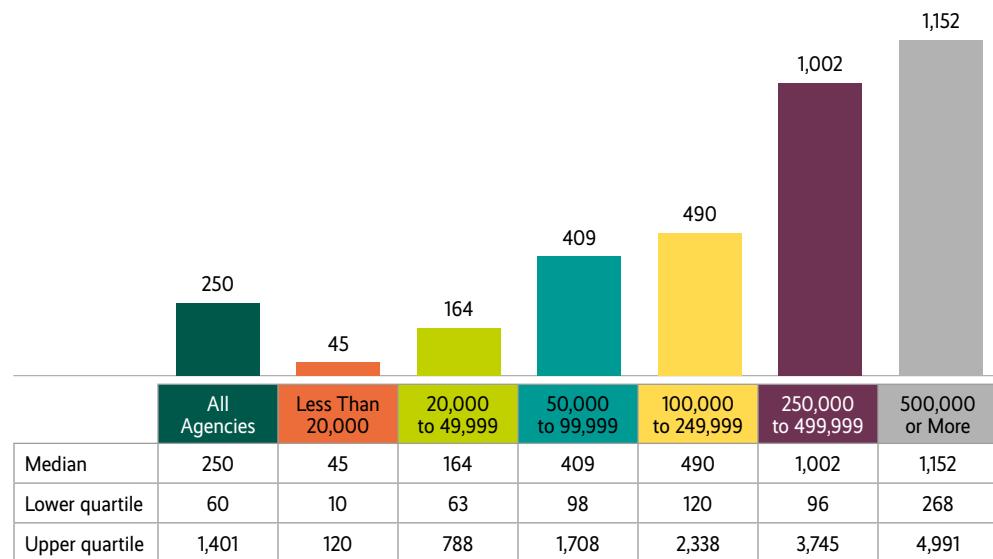


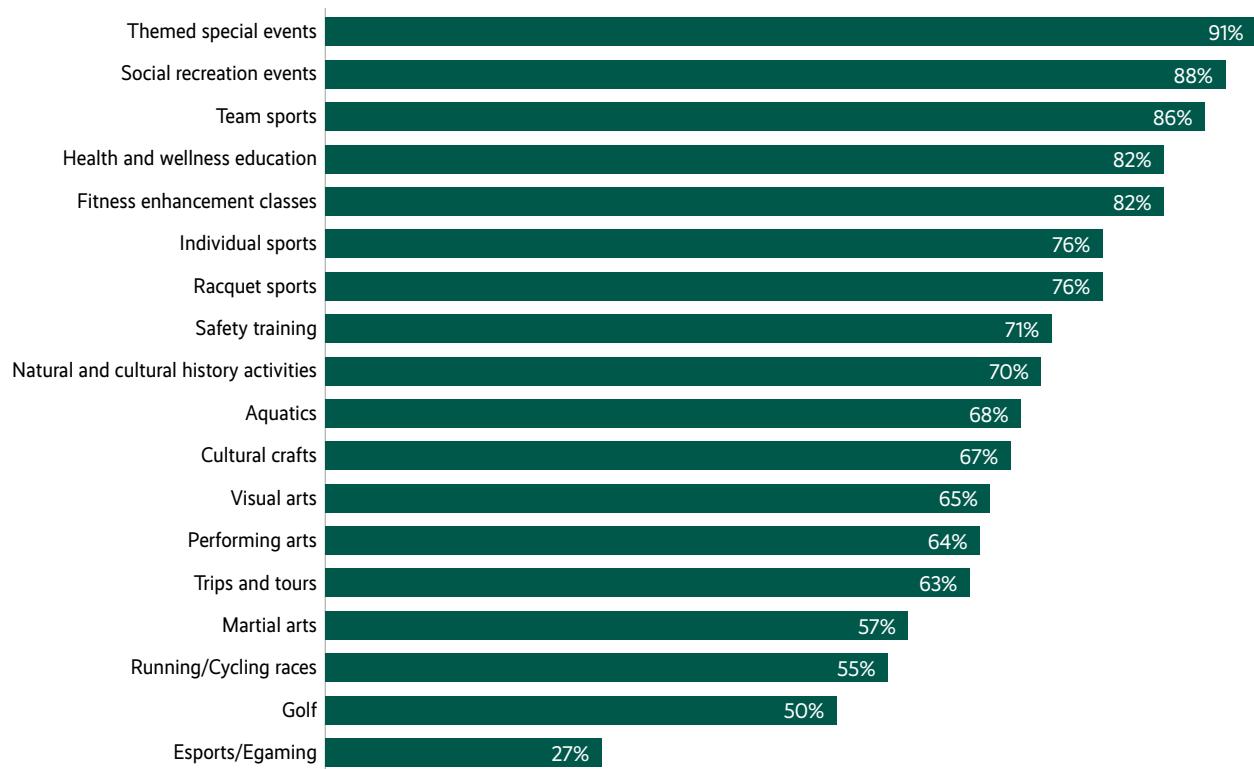
FIGURE 7.1: PERCENT OF ALL PROGRAMS THAT ARE FEE-BASED



A vast array of programming is offered through local parks and recreation. Programming can be activities, events, clubs, teams, classes or other types of group activities. **More than nine in 10 (91%) park and recreation agencies offer themed special events, such as movies**

or concerts in the park, cultural events, holiday festivities and more. Meeting people within the community, learning new skills and being active are some of the program outcomes in parks and recreation.

**FIGURE 8: PROGRAMMING OFFERED BY PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES
(PERCENT OF AGENCIES)**



Park and recreation agencies operate programs year-round for all ages and abilities. Summer camps, full-day care for youth and programs for older adults are reliable, low-cost and safe options for parents and caregivers.

Eighty-three percent of all park and recreation agencies offer summer camp; 77 percent offer older adult programming; and 67 percent offer programs for people with disabilities.

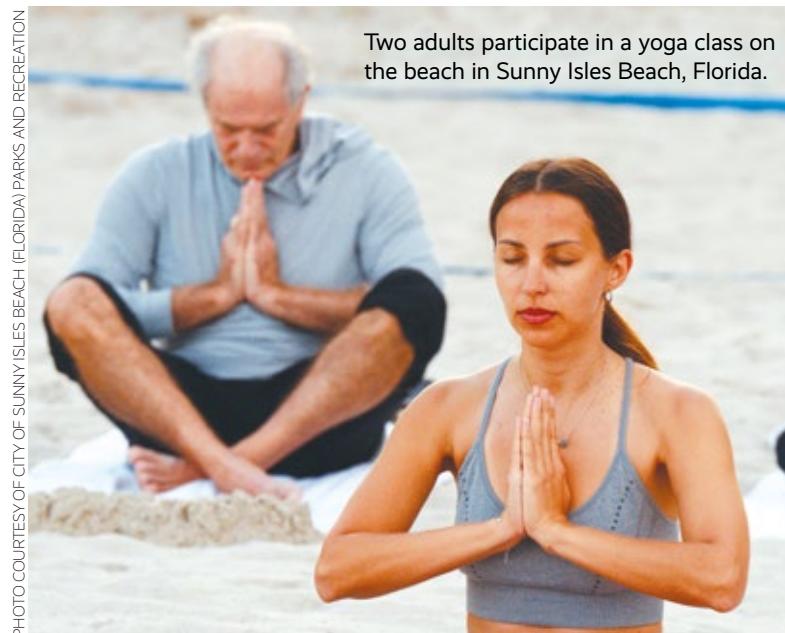
**FIGURE 9: PROGRAMS FOCUSED ON CHILDREN, OLDER ADULTS AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
(PERCENT OF AGENCIES BY JURISDICTION POPULATION)**

	All	Less Than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 249,999	250,000 to 499,999	500,000 or More
Summer camp	83%	93%	91%	72%	89%	73%	92%
Specific older adult programs	77%	85%	78%	67%	80%	71%	81%
Specific teen programs	68%	82%	74%	54%	78%	60%	75%
Programs for people with disabilities	67%	85%	84%	47%	85%	54%	76%
STEM programs*	60%	77%	76%	43%	76%	48%	66%
After-school programs	54%	74%	69%	46%	73%	41%	52%
Preschool	33%	41%	24%	30%	22%	27%	39%
Before-school programs	18%	23%	18%	16%	22%	11%	19%
Full-day care	8%	12%	8%	6%	9%	3%	6%

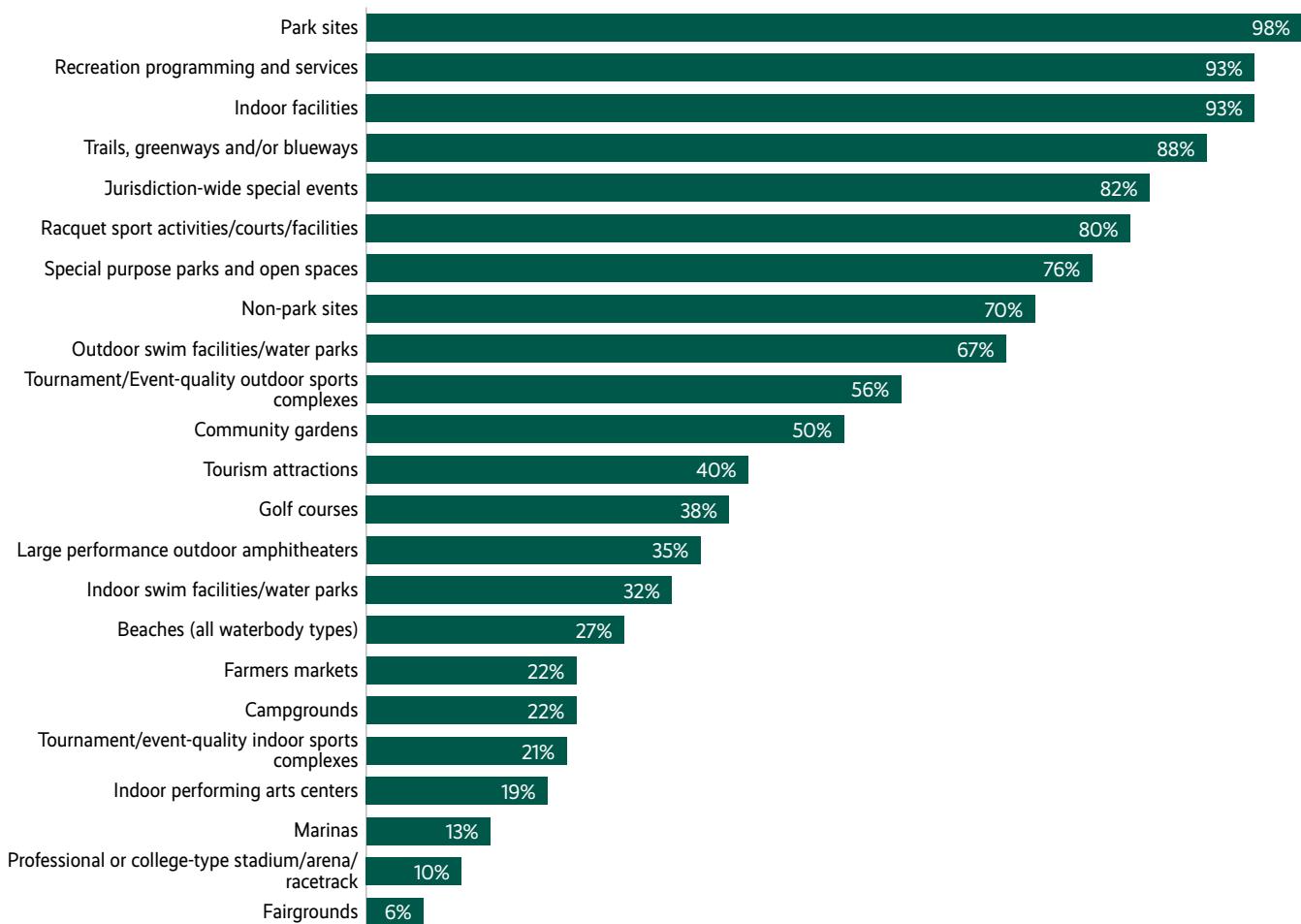
*Science, technology, engineering and math

Whether operating park sites, maintaining indoor facilities, contracting campgrounds, administering sports complexes or managing trails, local parks and recreation shoulders a variety of responsibilities for their communities. Not every community has a department of parks and recreation. However, **nearly all agencies (98%) report operating and maintaining park sites and 93 percent report providing recreation services.**

The responsibilities that an agency assumes often can depend on jurisdiction type. While 22 percent of agencies overall operate, maintain or contract campgrounds, 52 percent of county park and recreation agencies are responsible for these spaces. County park and recreation agencies (18%) are also more likely than agencies overall (6%) to manage or maintain fairgrounds.



**FIGURE 10: RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES
(PERCENT OF AGENCIES)**



STAFFING

PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF MCALLEN (TEXAS) PARKS AND RECREATION

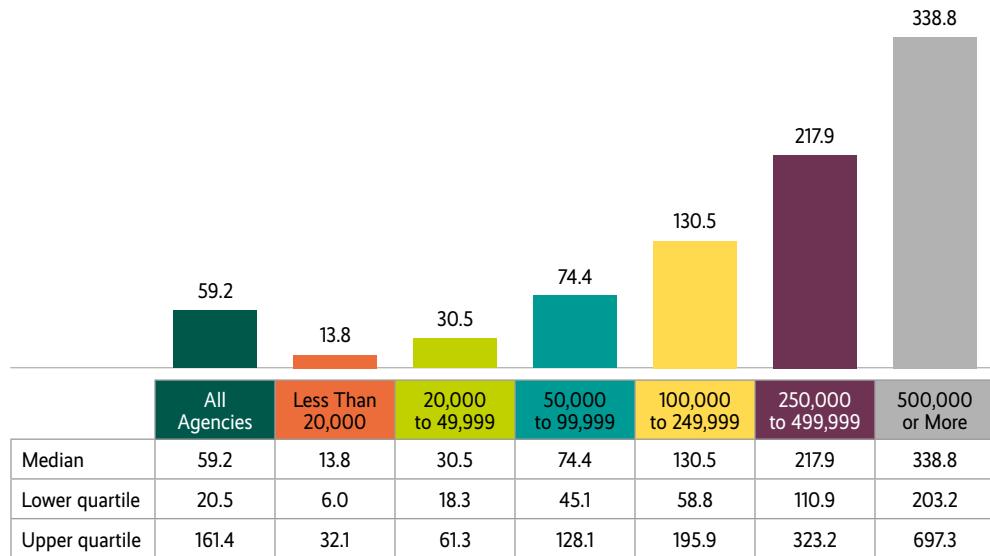
A group of people participate in a community clean-up in McAllen, Texas.



Park and recreation professionals care for myriad facilities and programs, resulting in communities that are vibrant and enjoyable places to live. These professionals strive for safe and welcoming spaces for all, and it is imperative that agencies receive sufficient funding to adequately staff facilities, events and programs to do so. **The typical park**

and recreation agency has 59.2 full-time equivalents (FTEs) on staff. This number increases as the population an agency serves increases. Agencies in jurisdictions with more than half a million residents have a median staff of more than 300 FTEs and nearly 700 FTEs in the upper quartile of that same population group.

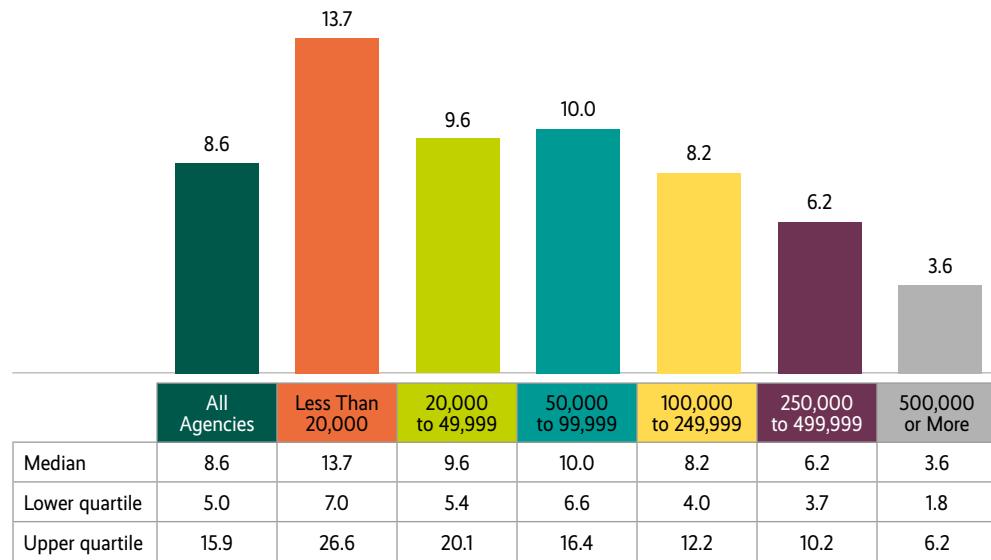
FIGURE 11: PARK AND RECREATION AGENCY STAFFING: FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS (FTE) (MEDIAN) BY JURISDICTION POPULATION



A different way to look at staffing levels is by number of FTEs per 10,000 residents. As seen in Figure 12, as the population size increases, the ratio of FTE's per 10,000 residents decreases. For example, jurisdictions of

20,000 people or less have 13.7 FTEs while jurisdiction of 500,000 or more have 3.6 FTEs for every 10,000 residents. **The typical park and recreation agency has 8.6 FTEs for every 10,000 residents.**

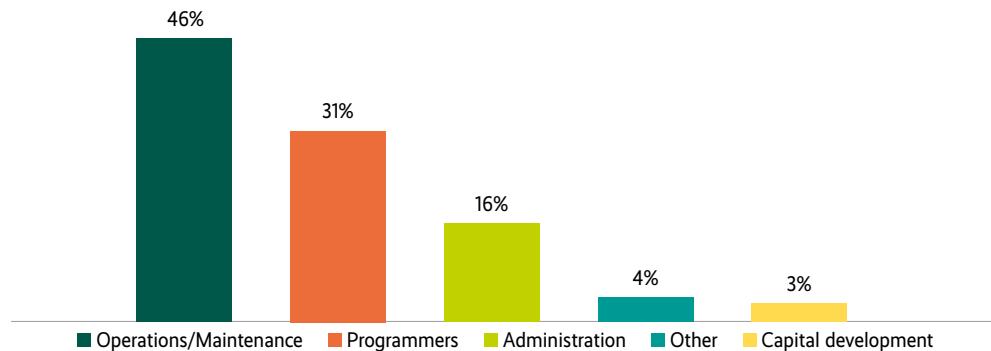
FIGURE 12: PARK AND RECREATION AGENCY STAFFING: FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS (FTE) PER 10,000 RESIDENTS (MEDIAN) BY JURISDICTION POPULATION



Park and recreation professionals have many titles and play many roles. Directors, maintenance foremen, aquatics specialists and others make up the passionate and dedicated teams found within local parks and recreation. **Forty-six percent of park and recreation agency personnel are involved in operations/mainte-**

nance and 31 percent are devoted to programming. Slightly less than a quarter of staff (23%) account for administrative, capital development or other roles. This division of roles changes little regardless of population, budget, jurisdiction type or region.

FIGURE 13: OPERATIONAL AREAS OF PARK AND RECREATION STAFF (AVERAGE) PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF AGENCY FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS (FTE)



BUDGET

PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF SCHERTZ (TEXAS) PARKS, RECREATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES



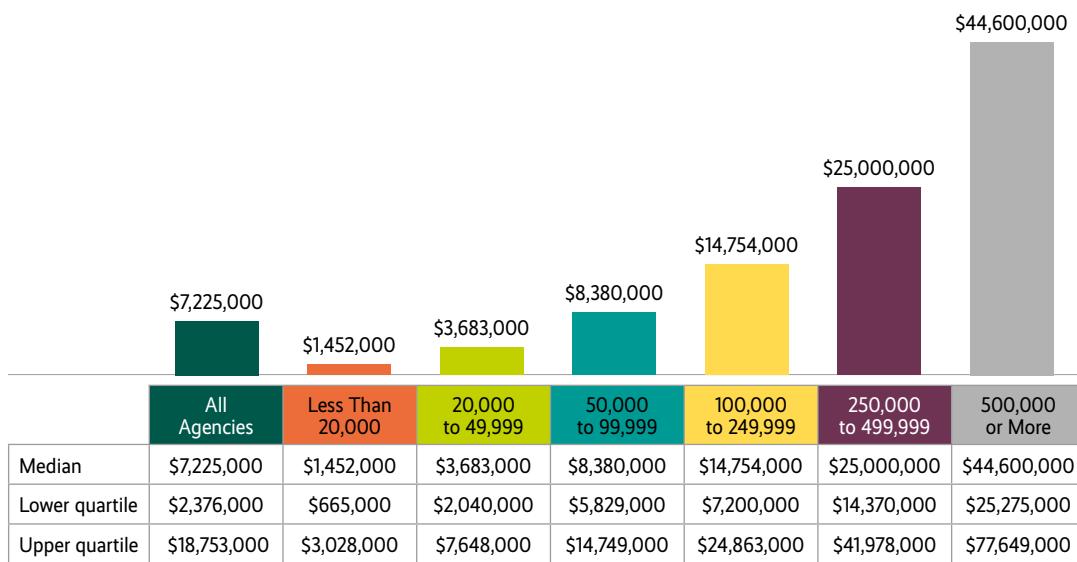
Two people bird watch on a nature trail in Schertz, Texas.

Annual Operating Budget

Determining the fiscal capabilities of a park and recreation agency requires in-depth knowledge of personnel services, contracts, commodities and supplies, and capital. Establishing an annual operating budget that, at a minimum, satisfies the needs of the community and meets the goals of key leaders of the governing body (i.e., mayor, board of directors) is a vital balancing act.

Viewing annual operating budgets in a variety of ways gives a more complete picture of how and where budgeting and spending occur across parks and recreation. **The typical park and recreation agency has annual operating expenditures of \$7,225,000.** Special park districts have the highest amount of median operating expenditures: more than \$12 million.

**FIGURE 14: ANNUAL OPERATING EXPENDITURES
(ROUNDED MEDIAN) BY JURISDICTION POPULATION**



While total operating expenditures increase with population, that pattern nearly reverses when examining operating expenditures per capita (per person). **The typical park and recreation agency has operating expenditures of \$103.13 per capita.** Agencies serving

a population of 100,000 or more have lower operating expenditures per capita than do those serving less populated jurisdictions. Special park districts report the largest amount of operating expenditures per capita — a median of \$237.11 per capita.

FIGURE 15: OPERATING EXPENDITURES PER CAPITA (MEDIAN) BY JURISDICTION POPULATION

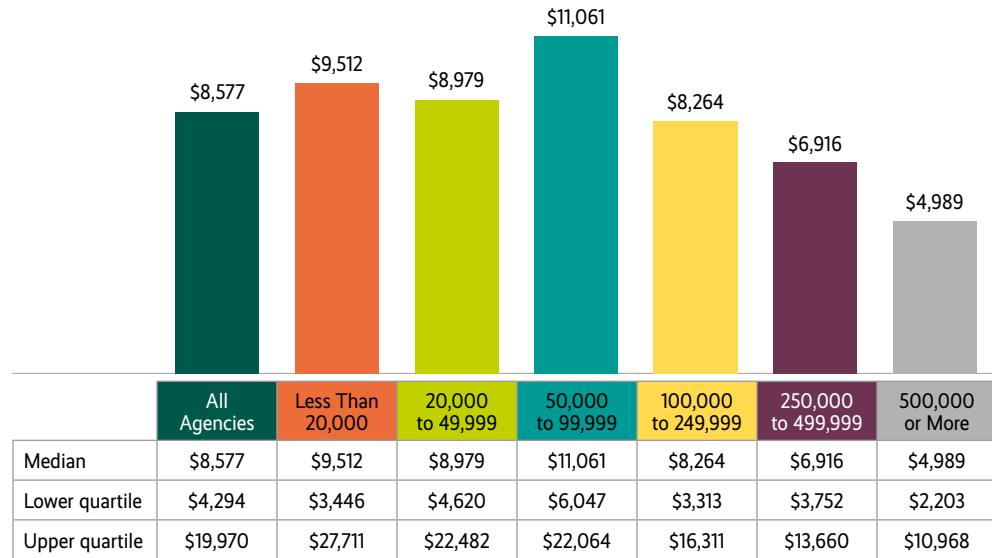


Evaluating operating expenditures by acre of park and non-park sites provides another look into where expenses occur. **The typical park and recreation agency has operating expenditures of \$8,577 per acre of park and non-park sites.**

Data show that operating expenditures are affected more by the number of park and non-park acres an agency manages or maintains than by the number of parks managed or maintained. Park and recreation agencies that maintain 250 acres or less have a median operating expenditure per acre of park and non-park sites of \$21,694. Conversely, park and recreation agencies that maintain more than 3,500 acres have a median operating expenditure per acre of park and non-park sites of \$3,399.



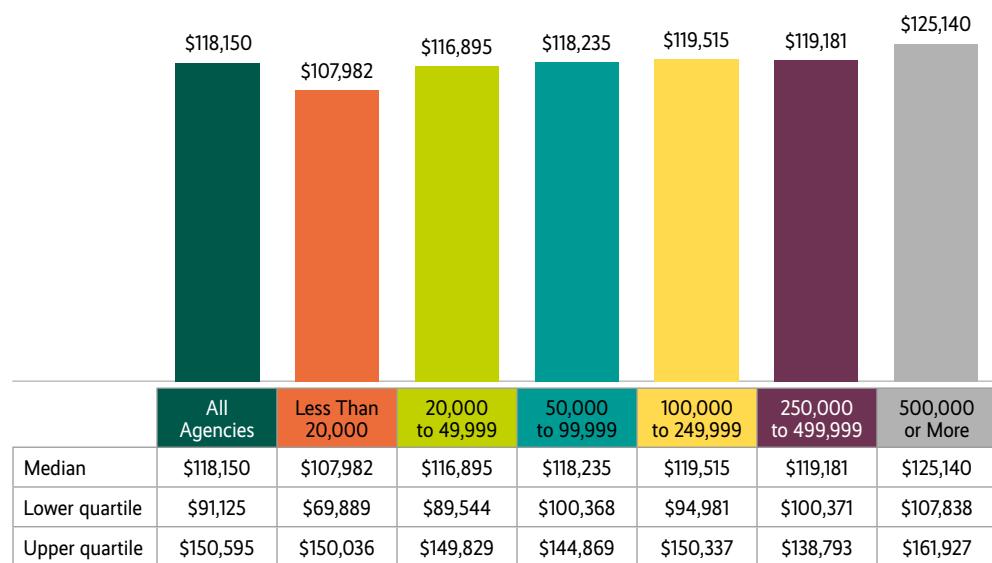
**FIGURE 16: OPERATING EXPENDITURES PER ACRE OF PARK AND NON-PARK SITES
(MEDIAN) BY JURISDICTION POPULATION**



Personnel services account for the largest portion of operating expenditures at park and recreation agencies annually. **The typical park and recreation agency has operating expenditures of \$118,150 per FTE.** Agencies

with budgets of less than a million dollars typically have operating expenditures of \$90,065 per FTE, while this expense per FTE at agencies in the mid-Atlantic region is \$131,312.

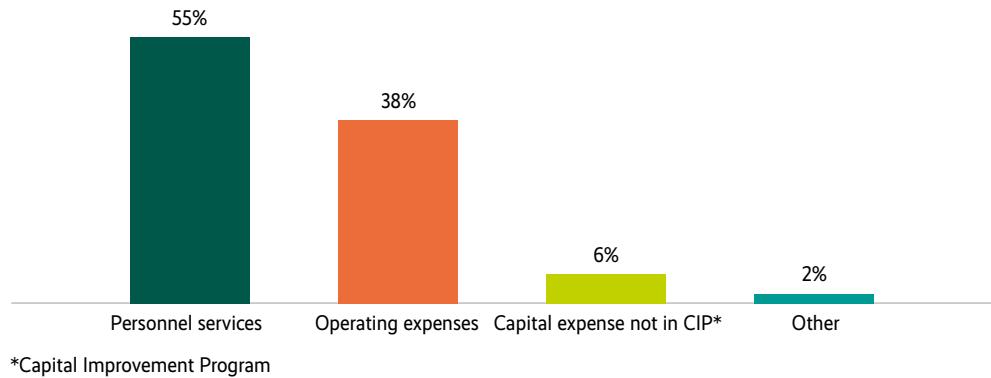
**FIGURE 17: OPERATING EXPENDITURES PER FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT (FTE)
(MEDIAN) BY JURISDICTION POPULATION**



Personnel services and operating expenses (e.g., program expenses, utilities, maintenance, transportation) account for 92 percent of park and recreation agencies' total budgeted operating expenditures. **Fifty-five percent of park and recreation operating expenditures are earmarked for personnel services, while 38 percent are for operating expenses.** A similar split is seen

throughout agencies of all population sizes, regions, jurisdiction types and budgets, with one exception. Park and recreation agencies with budgets of less than \$500,000 have a higher percentage of their operating expenditures distributed to operating expenses (52%) than to personnel services (38%).

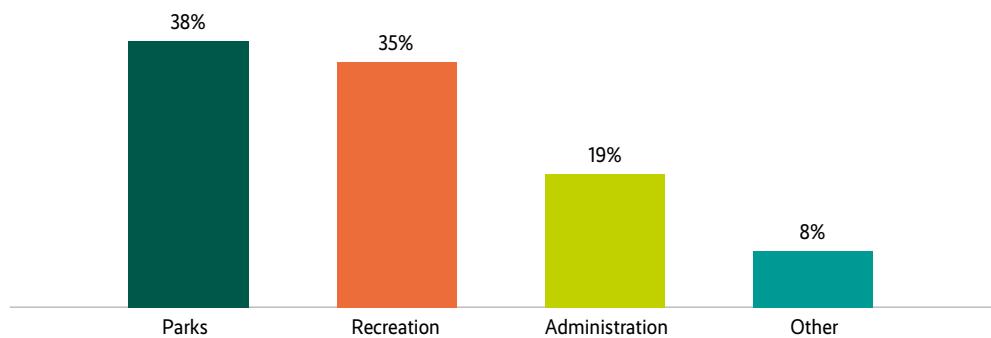
FIGURE 18: DISTRIBUTION OF OPERATING EXPENDITURES
(AVERAGE) PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF OPERATING EXPENDITURES



Dividing operating expenditures by dedicated areas is also an option. Park expenditures and recreation expenditures account for nearly three-quarters of operating expenditures (73%), with the distribution nearly evenly split. **The average percentage distribution of total operating expenditures devoted to parks is 38**

percent, while 35 percent is devoted to recreation. **Administration accounts for 19 percent of total operating expenditures.** Park and recreation agencies serving a population of 1 million or more devote 53 percent of their total operating expenses to parks and 26 percent to recreation.

FIGURE 19: DEDICATED OPERATING EXPENDITURES
(AVERAGE) PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF OPERATING EXPENDITURES



AGENCY FUNDING

PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF KETTERING (OHIO) PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURAL DEPARTMENT

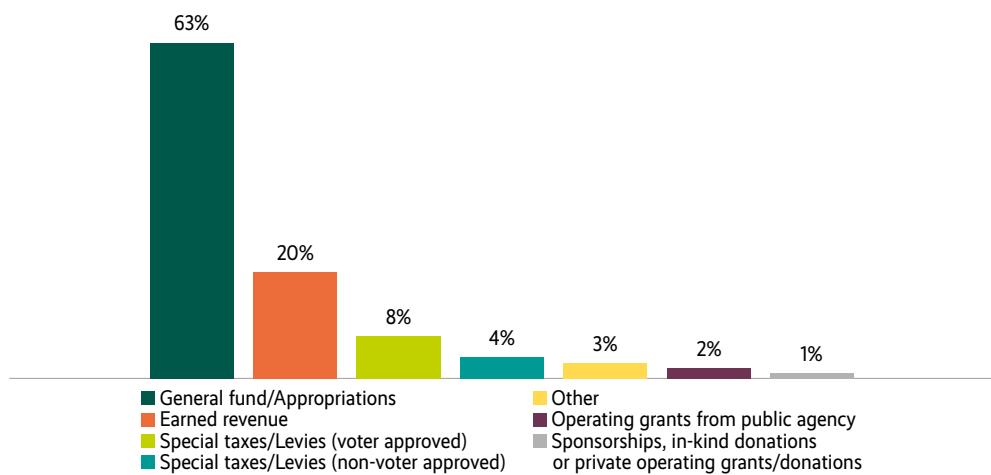


Youth participate in a dance class in Kettering, Ohio.

Park and recreation agencies gain funding through a variety of sources. In the average agency, 63 percent of available funds come from general fund tax support/appropriations and 20 percent come from earned revenue. Outliers are found among agencies in various regions and certain jurisdiction types. An estimated 42 percent of agencies in the Great Lakes region source available funds from their general fund in comparison to

nearly 80 percent of agencies in the south (79%) and southwest (77%). Special park districts (30%) and independent park districts/authorities (28%) have general fund tax support at a lower-than-average level. While the average park and recreation agency receives eight percent of its operating expenditures from voter-approved special taxes or levies, special park districts receive 23 percent of their funding via this avenue.

FIGURE 20: SOURCES OF OPERATING EXPENDITURES
(AVERAGE) PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF OPERATING EXPENDITURES



Revenue generation goals differ agency to agency. The typical park and recreation agency annually generates \$28.63 per capita of revenue. Agency locale and jurisdiction population play a significant role in per capita revenue generation. While per capita revenue of agencies in cities (\$29.51) closely aligns to the median, per capita

revenue for agencies in counties is \$7.39. On the other hand, special park districts generate \$77.81 per capita in revenue. Agencies serving a population of less than 20,000 people generate the largest amount of revenue per capita; those serving populations of 500,000 people or more generate per capita revenue of \$10.47.

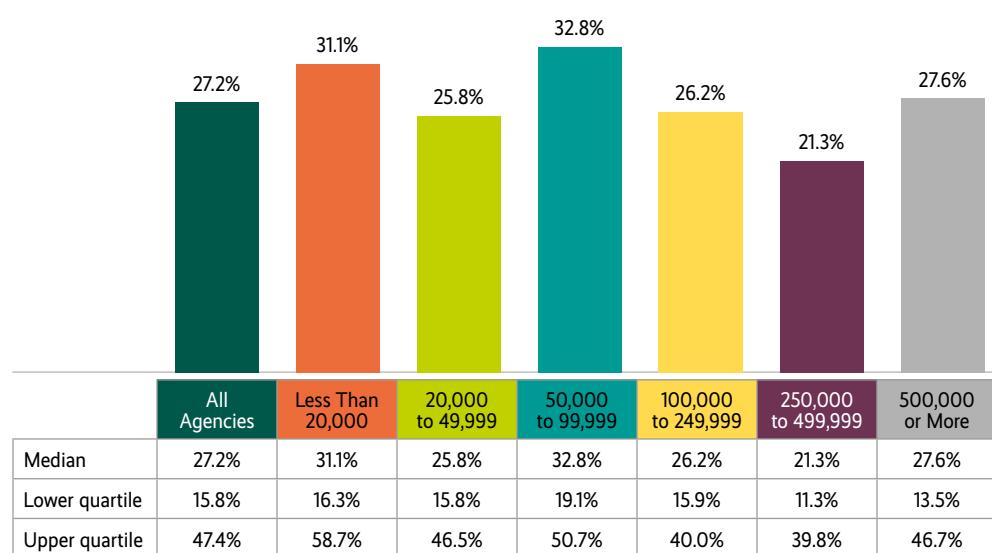
FIGURE 21: PARK AND RECREATION REVENUE PER CAPITA (MEDIAN) BY JURISDICTION POPULATION



Revenue as a percentage of operating expenditures (or cost recovery) can be an effective way to evaluate pricing structure and guide future budgetary decisions. **The typical park and recreation agency recovers 27.2**

percent of its annual operating expenditures from non-tax revenue. Agencies in the northeast see the highest cost recovery of all regions at 44 percent.

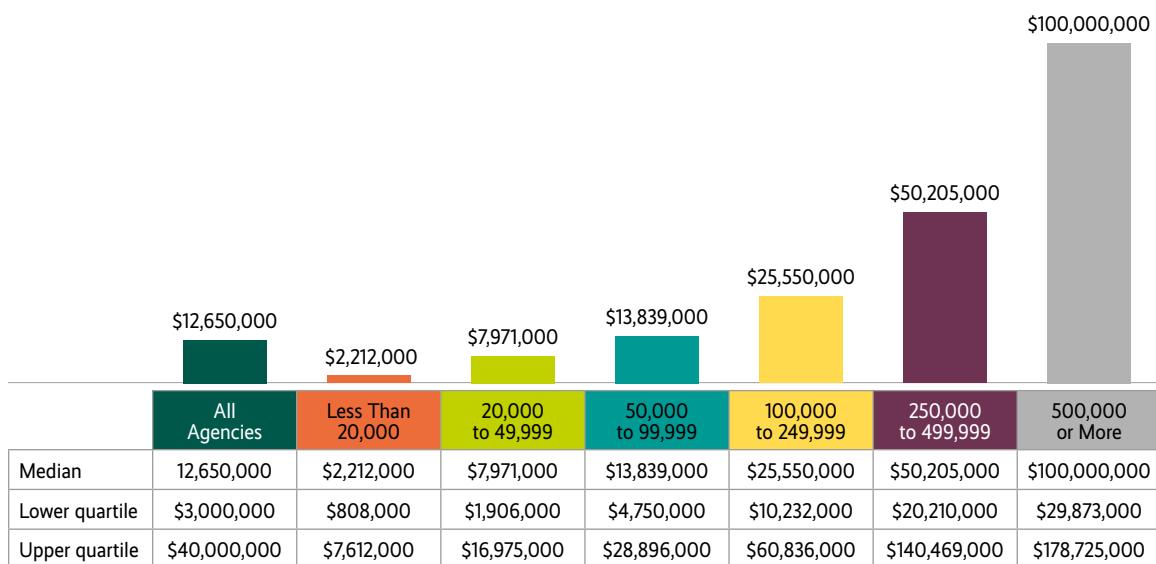
FIGURE 22: REVENUE AS A PERCENTAGE OF OPERATING EXPENDITURES (COST RECOVERY)
(PERCENTAGE OF OPERATING EXPENDITURES BY JURISDICTION POPULATION)



As park and recreation agencies consider investing in new facilities or improving existing infrastructure, multi-year budgeting helps facilitate long-range planning. **The typical park and recreation agency has a five-year capital spending budget of \$12,650,000.** This figure is

heavily influenced by population size. Agencies serving a population of less than 20,000 people have a five-year capital budget slightly more than \$2.2 million, while agencies serving a population of more than 500,000 people typically see this budget set at \$100 million.

FIGURE 23: FIVE-YEAR CAPITAL BUDGET SPENDING (ROUNDED MEDIAN) BY JURISDICTION POPULATION

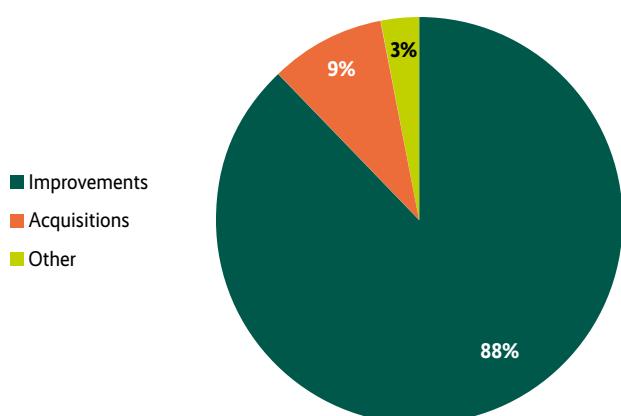


Park and recreation agencies manage, maintain and operate facilities of all sizes and functions. An agency may run the newest, most state-of-the-art recreation center while also managing aging centers in need of costly attention. Funding for maintaining a level of service in existing facilities and identifying needs for new facilities, offerings and programming based on the requirements and wants of residents are targets for capital budgets. **The average park and recreation agency designates 88 percent of its capital expenditures to improvements and nine percent to acquisitions.** Similar splits are found across agencies of all budget sizes, regions, jurisdiction types and populations.

The nearly 90 percent of budgeted capital expenditures assigned to improvements can be broken down further — average percentage designated to renovation versus new development and average percentage designated to parks versus buildings. **Nearly two-thirds of designated improvement dollars (65%) are applied to renovation, while just more than a third (35%) are**

FIGURE 24: TARGETS FOR CAPITAL EXPENDITURES

(AVERAGE) PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF CAPITAL EXPENDITURES



used for new development. Further, 70 percent of improvement dollars go to parks, while 30 percent are allocated to buildings.

FIGURE 25: IMPROVEMENT DOLLARS SPLIT BETWEEN RENOVATION AND NEW DEVELOPMENT
 (AVERAGE) PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF IMPROVEMENT DOLLARS

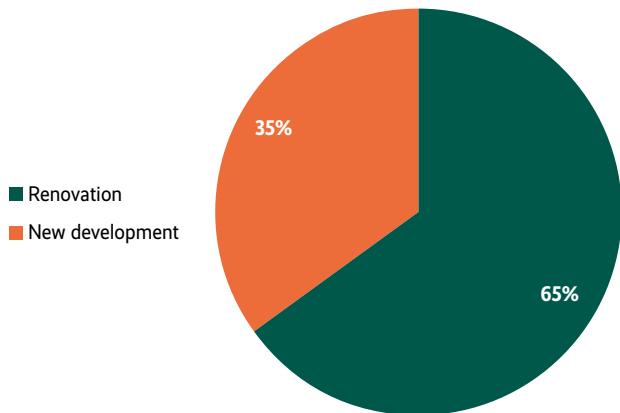
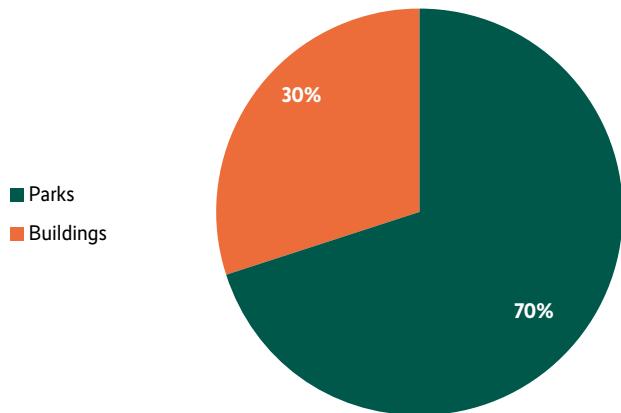


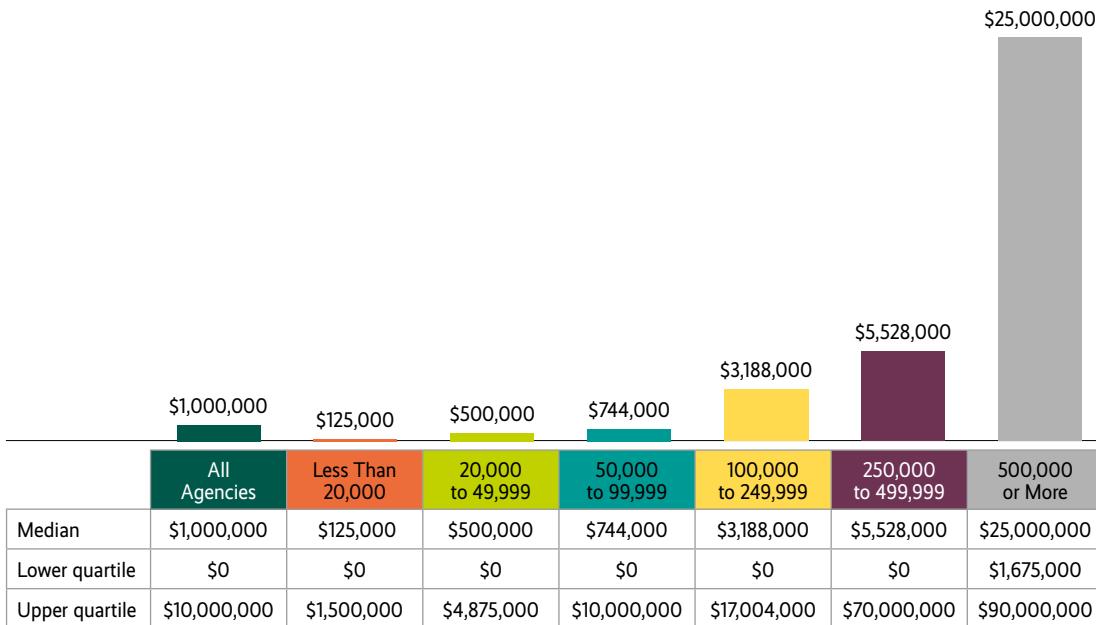
FIGURE 26: IMPROVEMENT DOLLARS SPLIT BETWEEN BUILDINGS AND PARKS
 (AVERAGE) PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF IMPROVEMENT DOLLARS



Whether because of lack of funding, time, resources and/or available staff, park and recreation agencies expect to have some deferred maintenance projects. Deferred maintenance projects vary greatly and tracking these projects is not a universal practice. **The typical park and recreation agency has an estimated \$1,000,000 of deferred maintenance projects.** While median deferred maintenance values are lower at agencies with smaller populations and higher at agen-

cies serving larger populations, the pattern is consistent based on the number of park acres maintained. Park and recreation agencies with 250 acres of parks maintained have an estimated \$55,500 in deferred maintenance, while agencies with 1,000 to 3,500 acres estimated this figure at \$4.4 million. Agencies maintaining more than 3,500 acres of parks have an estimated deferred maintenance value of more than \$17 million.

FIGURE 27: ESTIMATED VALUE OF DEFERRED MAINTENANCE PROJECTS PER AGENCY
 (ROUNDED MEDIAN) BY JURISDICTION POPULATION



CONCLUSIONS

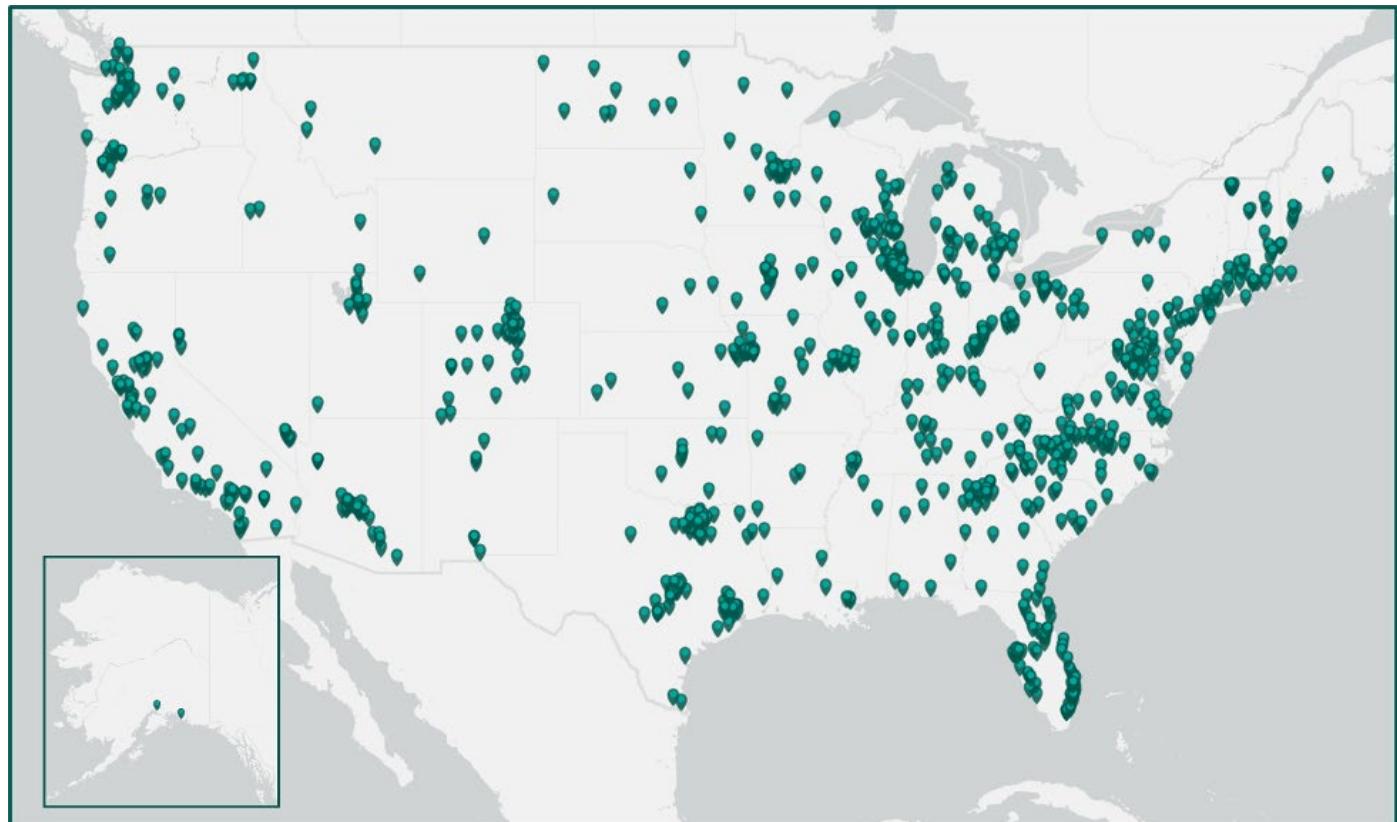
Through times of struggle and times of triumph, parks and recreation has stood as a source of respite, recreation, learning and so much more in the lives of the community members it serves. Park and recreation professionals are encouraged by the good work of their peers and the positive outcomes found in the communities to which they devote their efforts every single day.

This report serves as a resource guide when evaluating agency performance, a tool for making informed decisions, and a starting point for park and recreation professionals when engaging with key stakeholders and the public on the state of the park and recreation industry. Park and recreation data are not one-size-fits-all. As such, you are encouraged to access the interactive visualization on the [*NRPA Agency Performance Review* main page](#) for more in-depth analysis options. From that site you may customize these high-level data to more closely match your agency's characteristics by using any or all of the following filter options: population size, population density, budget, jurisdiction type, region, number of full-time equivalents (FTEs), number of parks maintained and number of acres of parks maintained. Additional data and reporting tools are available through [**NRPA Park Metrics**](#) — the platform through which this report's data were collected.

NRPA encourages park and recreation professionals to use this report, the aforementioned supplemental tools and the many resources available on the [**NRPA Research webpage**](#) to assist in making informed decisions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to give a huge thank you to the thousands of park and recreation professionals who participated in the annual NRPA Park Metrics campaign and completed their Agency Performance Survey. Thank you to Melissa May, Dianne Palladino, Samantha Serrano, Danielle Doll, Lindsay Collins, Alexandra Klein, Vitisia Paynich, Kim Mabon and Kate Anderson for making this report possible.



A map displays the agencies that contributed data for the 2025 NRPA Agency Performance Review.

ABOUT NRPA

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) is the leading not-for-profit organization dedicated to building strong, vibrant and resilient communities through the power of parks and recreation. With more than 60,000 members, NRPA advances this vision by investing in and championing the work of park and recreation professionals and advocates — the catalysts for positive change in service of equity, climate-readiness, and overall health and well-being.

NRPA brings strength to our message by partnering with like-minded organizations, including those in the federal government, nonprofits and commercial enterprises. Funded through dues, grants, registrations and charitable contributions, NRPA produces research, education and policy initiatives for our members that ultimately enrich the communities they serve.

NRPA places immense importance on research and data to raise the status of parks and recreation and conducts research with two goals. First, NRPA creates and analyzes data to help park and recreation agencies make optimal decisions on operations, programming and spending. Second, NRPA develops data and insights that support park and recreation professionals making the case for greater and more stable funding to policymakers, key stakeholders, the media and the general public. The NRPA Research team works closely with internal subject matter experts, respected industry consultants and the academic community to develop its reports and data resources. Learn more at nrpa.org/Research.



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